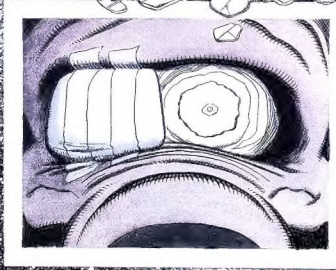
ISSN 0712-7774

Copyright © 1982 Dave Sim

CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
5¢

EPILOGUE



200
NOV

CEREBUS
NO. 200 NOVEMBER 1995

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer, Characters/ pencil & ink, lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist/pencil & ink, cover colourist, mechanical tones

CAROL WEST
Administrative Assistant

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

DIANA SCHUTZ
Proofreading

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)
Women

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 186)
Reads

•

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 187 to Cerebus 200)
Minds

MONTHLY
ALL CONTENTS ©1995 DAVE SIM AND GERHARD
PRINTED IN CANADA by PRENEY PRINT & LITHO. WINDSOR, ONTARIO

FROM THE HOME OFFICE IN MOOSEJAW, SASKATCHEWAN

DAVE'S TOP TEN ANSWERS TO: 'WHY AN AARDVARK?'

NUMBER 10!

Letter 'A' overstock sale on 'You Stick 'Em' lettering at the Art store!

NUMBER 9!

Didn't know how to draw a Vanaheim!

NUMBER 8!

'No trade' clause in rabbit, mouse and duck contracts at Time-Warner and Disney!

NUMBER 7!

Chicks really dig those ugly quadrupeds, man!

NUMBER 6!

Shoo-in for lucrative Black Flag Termite Hotel commercial endorsement!

NUMBER 5!

Kato Kaelin's idea when he crashed at my place for a few weeks!

NUMBER 4!

Too lazy to get past first page of 'Big Golden Book of Animals That Have Never Been Trademarked'!

NUMBER 3!

African mammal guarantees all-important 'black vote' in Georgia primary!

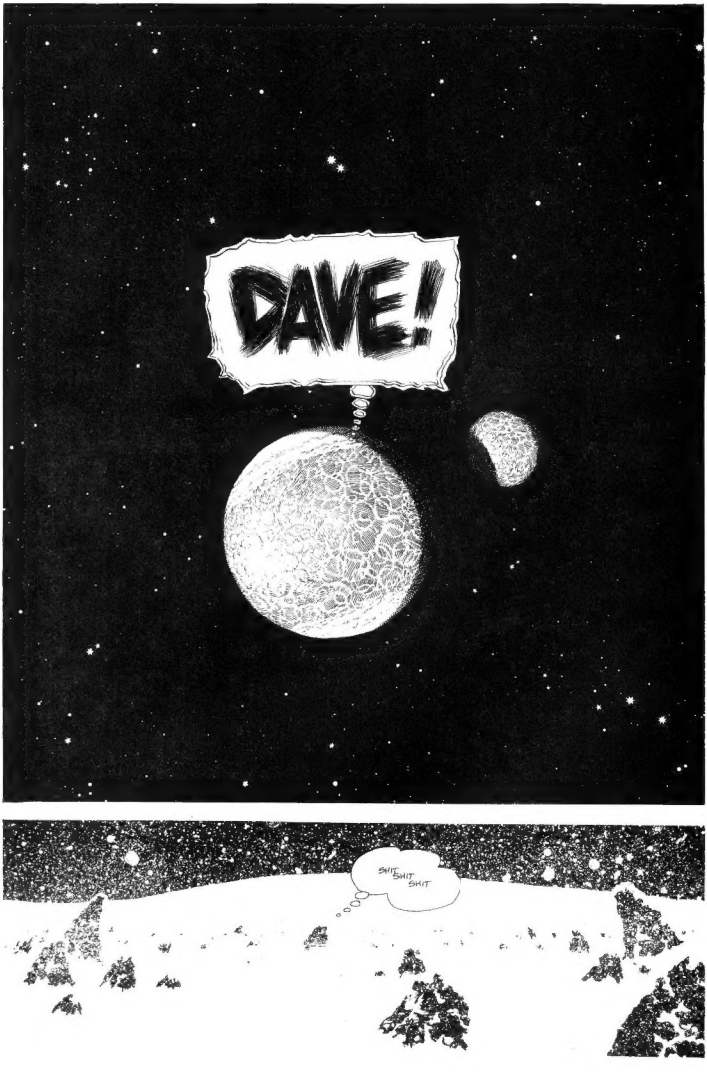
NUMBER 2!

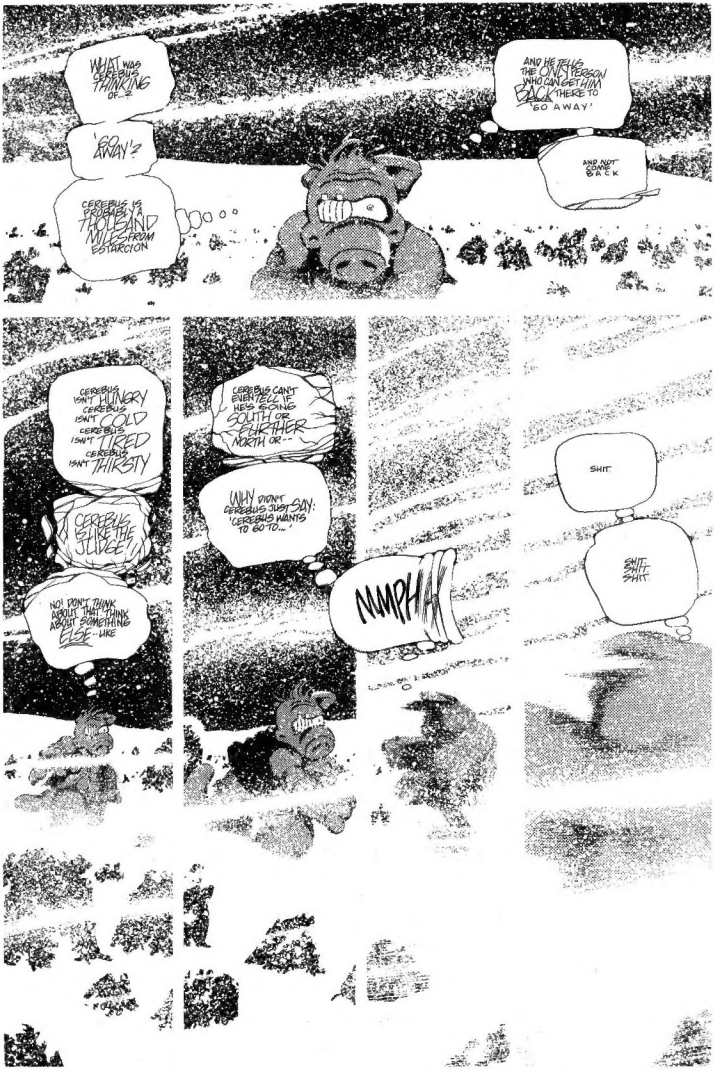
Inspired by termite mound in DC Comics back-issue bin at Now & Then Books!

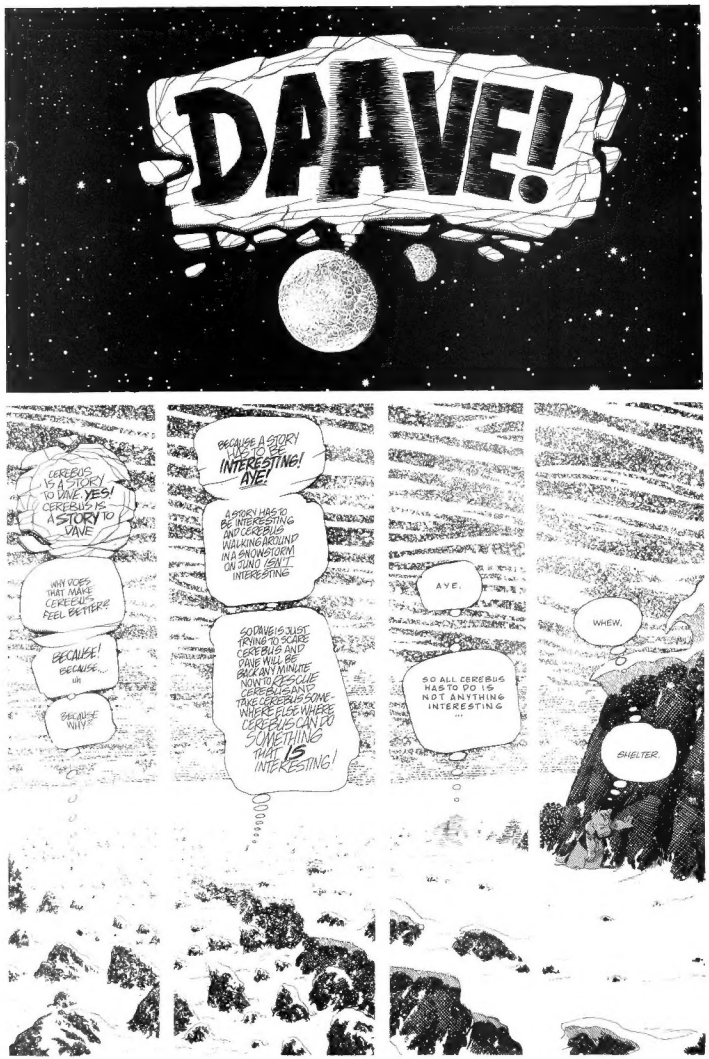
AND THE NUMBER ONE ANSWER TO: 'WHY AN AARDVARK?'

Disappointing test-market results on Cerebus the Grouper Fish!

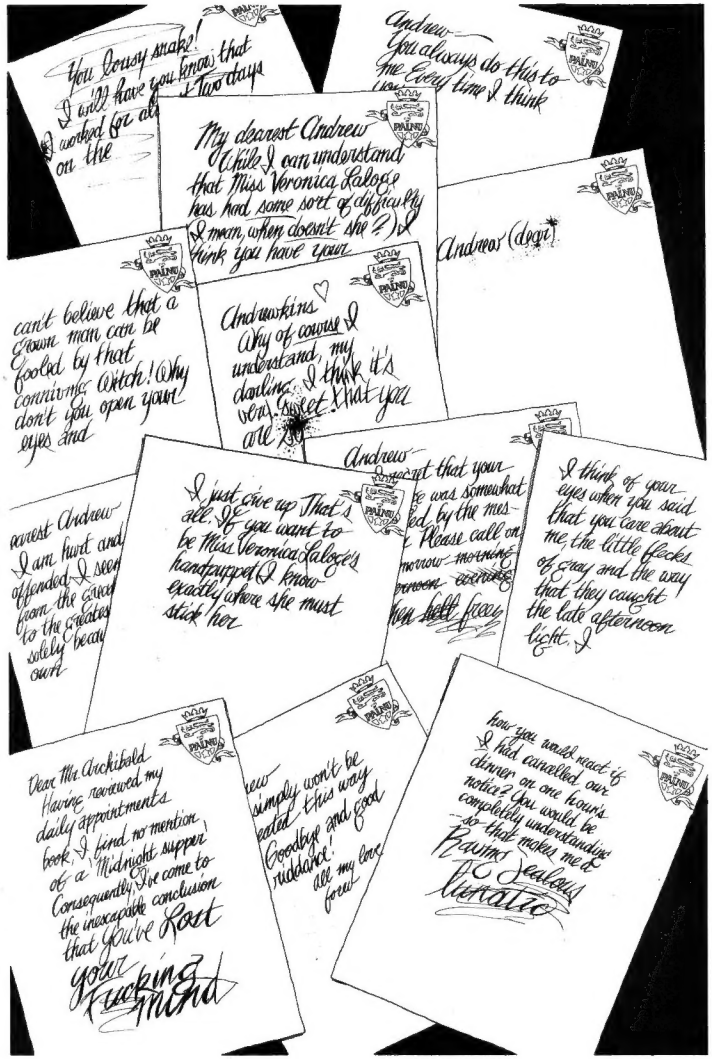
epilogue


DAVE!
SHIT SHIT SHIT

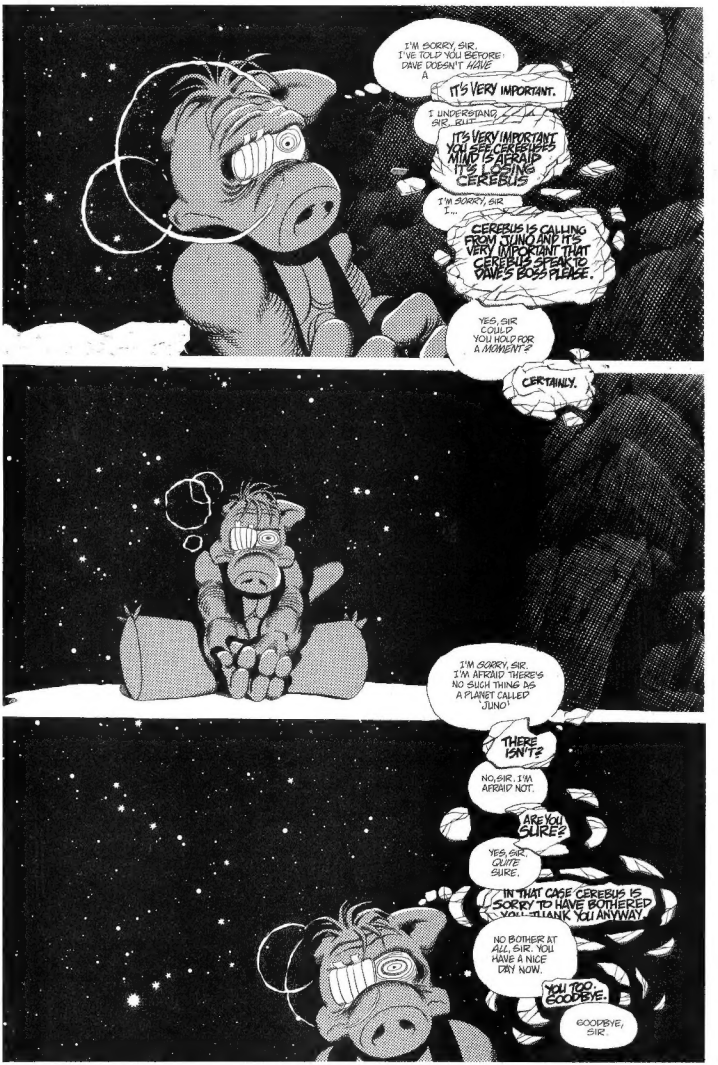

WHAT WAS CEREBUS THINKING OF...
'GO AWAY'?
CEREBUS IS PROBABLY A THOUSAND MILES FROM ESTARCION
AND HE TELLS THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN GET HIM BACK 'THERE TO 'GO AWAY'
AND NOW SHE'S BACK.
CEREBUS ISN'T HUNGRY
CEREBUS ISN'T COLD
CEREBUS ISN'T TIRED
CEREBUS ISN'T THIRSTY
IT CEREBUS SMELLS THE JUICE!!
NO! DON'T THINK ABOUT THAT! THINK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE - LIKE
CEREBUS CAN'T EVENTUALLY HE'S GOING SOUTH OR FURTHER NORTH OR --
UNLY DIDN'T CEREBUS JUST SAY: 'CEREBUS WANTS TO GO TO...'
NUMPH
SHIT
SHIT SHIT SHIT

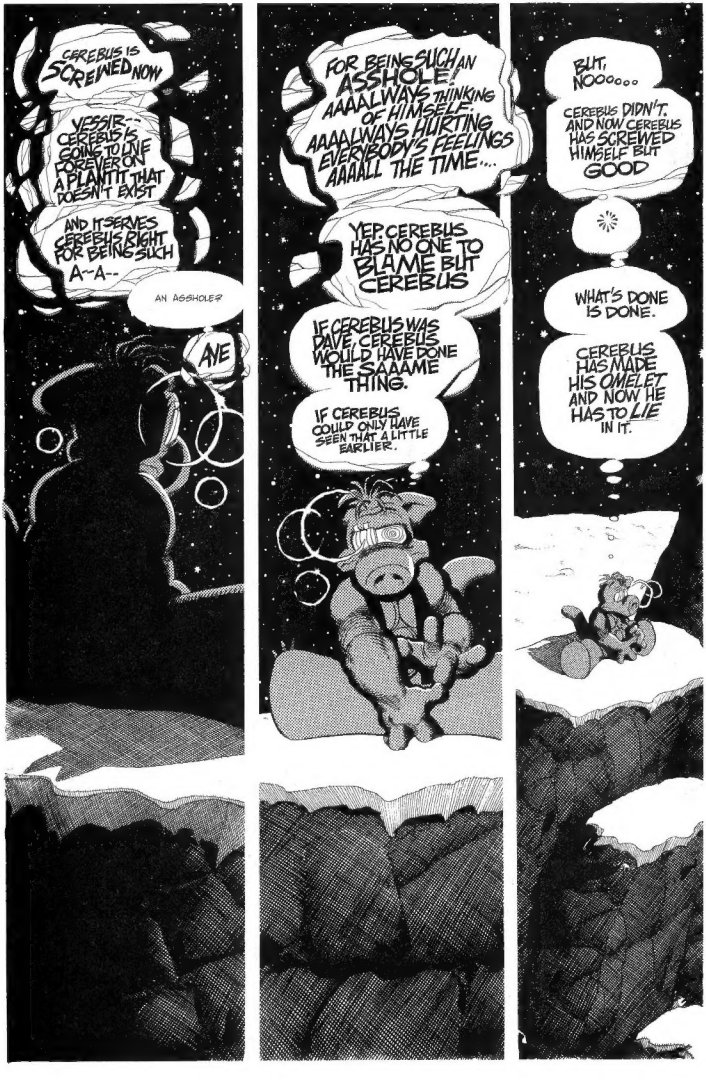

DAAVE!
CEREBUS IS A STORY TO DAVE! YES! CEREBUS IS A STORY TO DAVE
WHY DOES THAT MAKE CEREBUS FEEL BETTER?
BECAUSE! BECAUSE... UH
BECAUSE WHY?
BECAUSE A STORY HAS TO BE INTERESTING! AYE!
A STORY HAS TO BE INTERESTING AND CEREBUS WALKING AROUND IN A SNOWSTORM ON JUNO ISN'T INTERESTING
SO DAVE IS JUST TRYING TO SCARE CEREBUS AND DAVE WILL BE BACK ANY MINUTE NOW TO RESCUE CEREBUS AND TAKE CEREBUS SOMEWHERE ELSE WHERE CEREBUS CAN DO SOMETHING THAT IS INTERESTING!
AYE.
SO ALL CEREBUS HAS TO DO IS NOT ANYTHING INTERESTING ...
WHEW.
SHELTER.

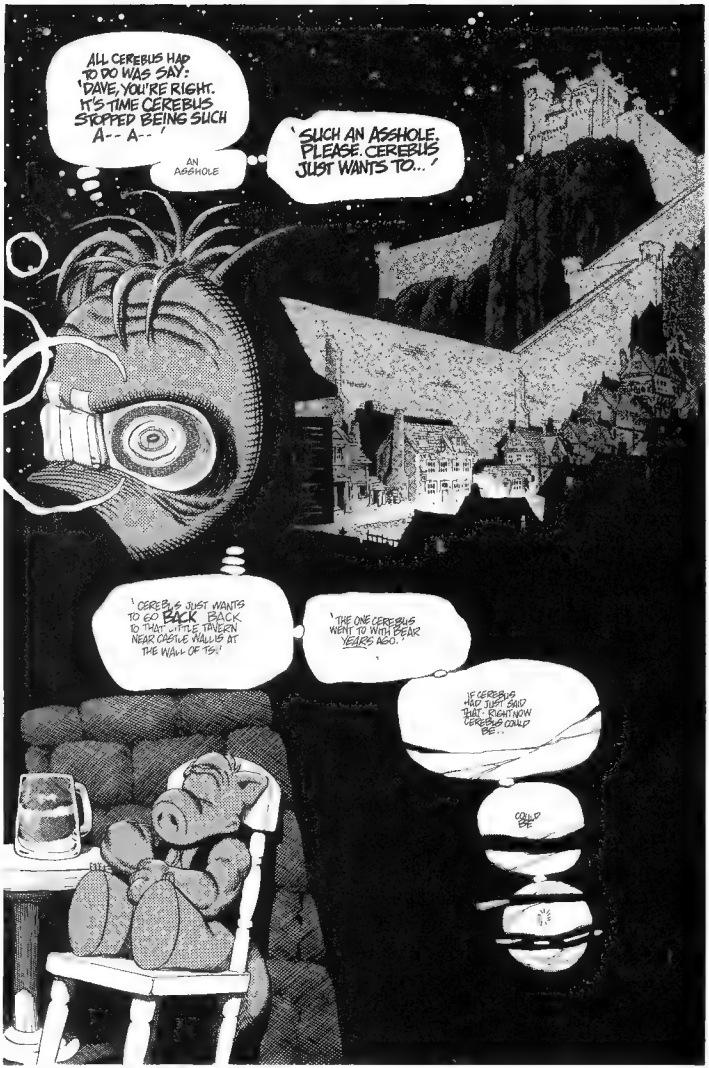
AYE.
AYE.
DAVE THINKS HE'S SO SMART BUT CEREBUS HAS GOT HIM THIS TIME... HEHEHE.
CEREBUS WILL JUST STAY ON THE SHELTERED SIDE OF THIS MOUNTAIN AND NOT DO ANYTHING INTERESTING
AND AS SOON AS DAVE GETS BORED WITH CEREBUS NOT DOING ANYTHING INTERESTING, DAVE WILL COME BACK AND...

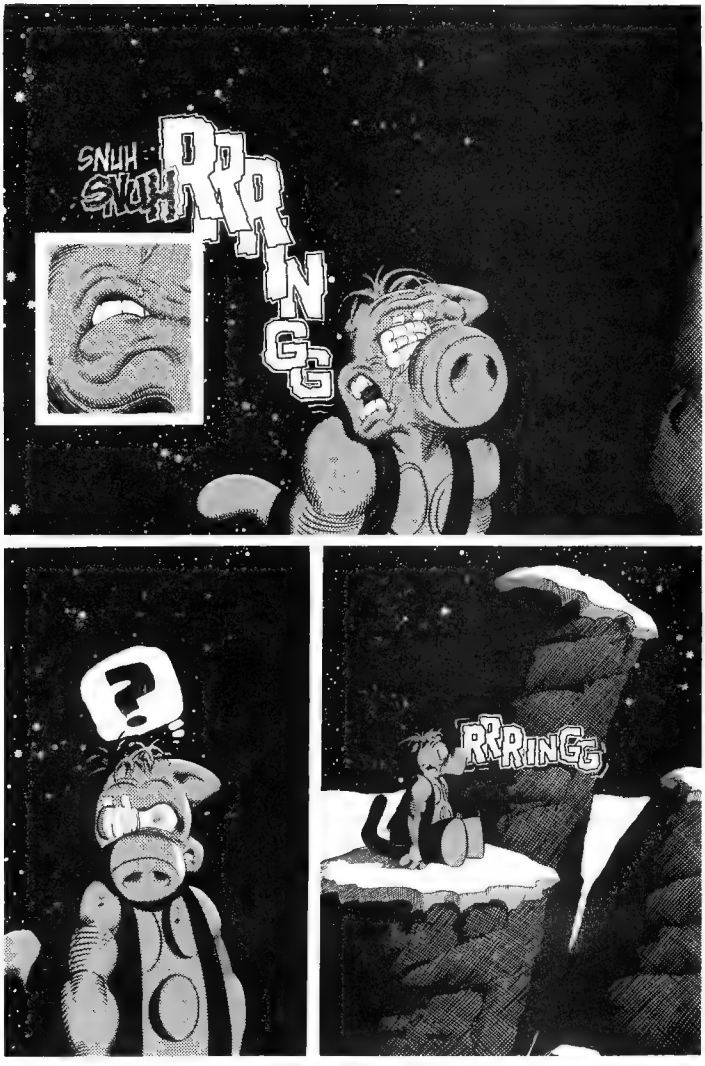

You lousy snake!
I will have you know that
Two days
Andrew
You always do this to me Every time I think
My dearest Andrew
While I can understand that Miss Veronica Laloe
has had some sort of difficulty
I mean, when doesn't she?)
think you have your
Andrear (dear)
can't believe that a
grown man can be
fooled by that
conniving witch! Why
don't you open your
eyes and
Andrewkins
Why of course I
understand, my
darling. I think it's
very sweet that you
Andrew
I just give up That's
all. If you want to
be Miss Veronica Laloe's
handpuppet I know
exactly where she must
stick her
I think of your
eyes when you said
that you care about
me, the little flecks
of gray and the way
that they caught
the late afternoon
light
Dear Mr Archibald
Having reviewed my
daily appointments
book, I find no mention
of a 'Midnight supper'
Consequently, I've come to
the inescapable conclusion
that You've Rost
your fucking friend
how you would react if
I had cancelled our
dinner on one hour's
notice? You would be
completely understanding
- so that makes me a
Bastard
A Jealous
Everyday

PLUTO.
(THREE WEEKS LATER)
AARDVARK-VANAHEIM.
HELLO IS THIS THE PLACE THAT DOES CEREBUS?
YES IT IS.
THIS IS CEREBUS CALLING. CEREBUS WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK TO DAVE'S BOSS PLEASE.


I'M SORRY, SIR. I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE: DAVE DOESN'T HAVE A
IT'S VERY IMPORTANT.
I UNDERSTAND, SIR, BUT—
IT'S VERY IMPORTANT YOU SEE CEREBUS'S MIND IS AFRAID IT'S LOSING CEREBUS
I'M SORRY, SIR I...
CEREBUS IS CALLING FROM JUNO AND IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT CEREBUS SPEAK TO DAVE'S BOSS PLEASE.
YES, SIR. COULD YOU HOLD FOR A MOMENT?
CERTAINLY.
I'M SORRY, SIR. I'M AFRAID THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A PLANET CALLED JUNO!
THERE ISN'T?
NO, SIR. I'M AFRAID NOT.
ARE YOU SURE?
YES, SIR. QUITE SURE.
IN THAT CASE CEREBUS IS SORRY TO HAVE BOTHERED YOU—THANK YOU ANYWAY
NO BOTHER AT ALL, SIR. YOU HAVE A NICE DAY NOW.
YOU TOO. GOODBYE.
GOODBYE, SIR.


CEREBUS IS SCREWED NOW
YESSIR-- CEREBUS IS GOING TO LIVE FOREVER ON A PLANET IT THAT DOESN'T EXIST
AND IT SERVES CEREBUS RIGHT FOR BEING SUCH A--A--
AN ASSHOLE!
AYE
FOR BEING SUCH AN ASSHOLE! AAAALWAYS THINKING OF HIMSELF. AAAALWAYS HURTING EVERYBODY'S FEELINGS AAAALL THE TIME...
YEP. CEREBUS HAS NO ONE TO BLAME BUT CEREBUS
IF CEREBUS WAS DAVE, CEREBUS WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAAAME THING.
IF CEREBUS COULD ONLY HAVE SEEN THAT A LITTLE EARLIER.
BUT, NOOOOOO
CEREBUS DIDN'T, AND NOW CEREBUS HAS SCREWED HIMSELF BUT GOOD
WHAT'S DONE IS DONE.
CEREBUS HAS MADE HIS OMELET AND NOW HE HAS TO LIE IN IT.

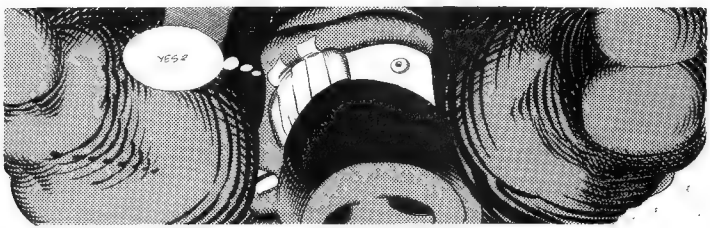

ALL CEREBUS HAD TO DO WAS SAY: 'DAVE, YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S TIME CEREBUS STOPPED BEING SUCH A-- A--'
AN ASSHOLE
'SUCH AN ASSHOLE. PLEASE. CEREBUS JUST WANTS TO...'
'CEREBUS JUST WANTS TO GO BACK. BACK TO THAT LITTLE TAVERN NEAR CASTLE WALLIS AT THE WALL OF TSY.'
'THE ONE CEREBUS WENT TO WITH BEAR YEARS AGO.'
IF CEREBUS HAD JUST SAID THAT RIGHT NOW CEREBUS COULD BE...
COULD BE


SNUH
SNUH
RR.
RING
G
?
RRRINGG

RINNG
HELLO...?
CEREBUS?
AYE?
HI, CEREBUS. THIS IS DAVE. HAVE YOU GOT A MINUTE?
AYE

I KNOW WE AREN'T ON SPEAKING TERMS, BUT I JUST WANTED TO SAY -- ABOUT THE 'INJURY-TO-EYE' THING
WE...
WHEN I WENT THROUGH IT, I KNEW WHAT A SYRINGE DID-WHAT AN ANAESTHETIC DID. YOU DIDN'T KNOW
SO I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU HOW MUCH I ADMIRE YOUR BRAVERY UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO TELL YOU. AND NOW I'LL RESPECT YOUR WISHES AND LEAVE YOU ALONE.

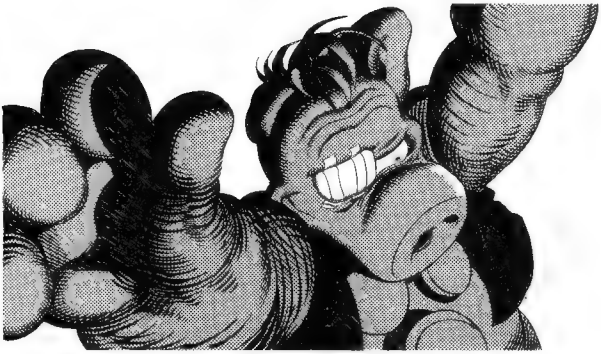
WAIT!
STOP
DON...


YES?

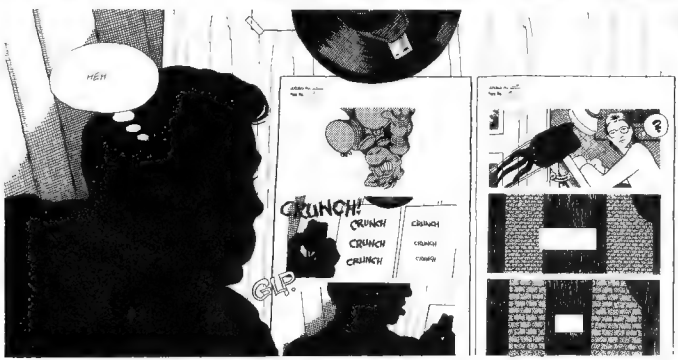
PLEASE DAVE
PLEASE SEND CEREBUS BACK TO ESTARCION
TO ESTARCION
NOT JAKA.
CEREBUS FINALLY UNDERSTANDS
YOU DO?
OH AYE
CEREBUS HAS WASTED YEARS - YEARS - WAITING FOR SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LOVE HIM ... WHO PROBABLY NEVER DID LOVE HIM - TO COME BACK
'ALONE UNMOURNED AND UNLOVED'
THAT'S WHAT THE JUDGE MEANT ISN'T IT?
IF CEREBUS KEEPS JUST ... WAITING ... FOR JAKA TO COME BACK, CEREBUS IS ALWAYS GOING TO BE ALONE.
IF CEREBUS NEVER MAKES FRIENDS WITH ANYONE HOW CAN CEREBUS EXPECT TO BE ANYTHING BUT 'UNMOURNED'?
IF CEREBUS NEVER TRIES TO LOVE ANYONE BESIDES JAKA, WHO'S GOING TO LOVE CEREBUS BACK?
RIGHT?

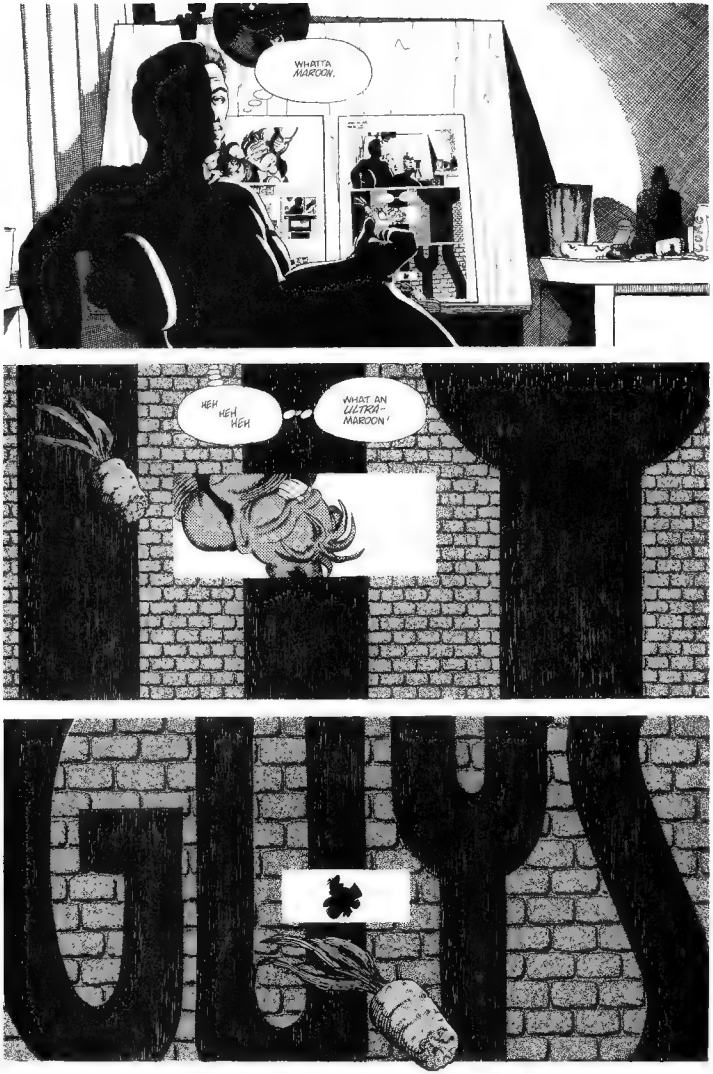
AYE CEREBUS UNDERSTANDS NOW DAVE
CEREBUS = SORRY HE CALLED YOU 'EVIL' IF YOU HADN'T SHOWED CEREBUS WHAT YOU SHOWED HIM CEREBUS WOULD HAVE JUST WASTED THE REST OF HIS LIFE WAITING FOR JAKA. CEREBUS SINCERELY APOLOGIZES
IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME I'VE BEEN CALLED 'EVIL' AND I DOUBT IT WILL BE THE LAST-- BUT (ANYWAY)
APOLOGY ACCEPTED
AYE? GOOD
I'LL SEND YOU BACK WHENEVER YOU LIKE. THE LITTLE TAVERN AT THE WALL OF 791- JUST BELOW CASTLE WALLIS
AYE
CEREBUS WILL BE A LOT BETTER THIS TIME. CEREBUS IS NO SAINT BUT YOU'LL SEE. CEREBUS CAN BE VERY NICE WHEN HE WANTS TO BE.
THAT'S VERY TRUE
NO MORE GETTING A LITTLE BIT WARM AND THEN SNOWING ALL OVER HIMSELF FOR CEREBUS..
NO SIR CEREBUS IS GOING TO BE WARM ALL THE TIME
SEE THAT LITTLE GRAY GUY OVER THERE. (PEOPLE WILL SAY) IF HE'S VERY, VERY WARM.
EVERYONE IS GOING TO BE CEREBUS' FRIEND?
EVERYONE

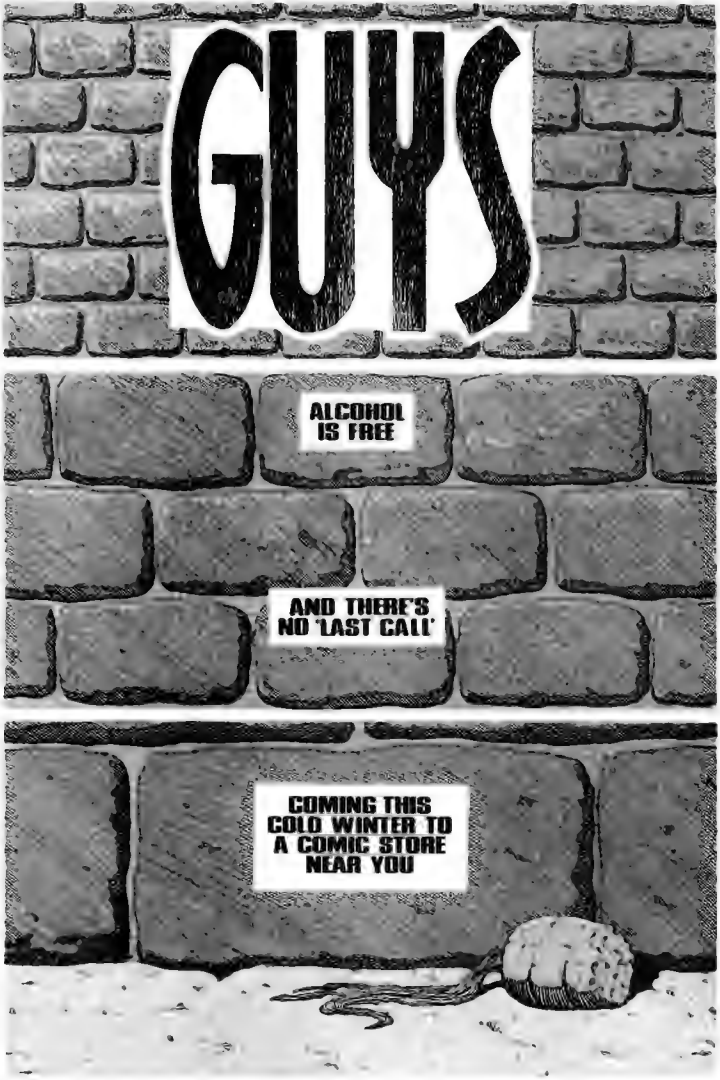
WHEN CERBERUS WALKS DOWN THE ROYAL MILE TO WALUS CASTLE EVERYONE WILL SAY HI TO CERBERUS 'HOW'S IT GOING CERBERUS?
NEW, THAT IS GREAT NOW ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS JUMP OFF OF THE ROCK YOU'RE
LOOK EVERYONE! IT'S CERBERUS!" "WE LOVE YOU CERBERUS" "HOWDY CERBERUS!" "YOU'RE LOOKING MIGHTY FINE TODAY, CERBERUS!"
LISTEN, I HATE TO INTERRUPT YOUR... PARADE BUT WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF SPACE HERE
SORRY
SORRY
AGAIN CERBERUS SINCERELY APOLOGIZES WHAT WERE YOU SAY NOW
YOU JUST HAVE TO JUMP OFF OF THE ROCK YOU'RE STANDING ON
YOU'LL DRIFT DOWN THROUGH THE 'WHITENESS' FOR A WHILE AND THE NEXT THING YOU KNOW YOU'LL BE RIGHT OUTSIDE THE TAVERN.
REALLY?
UH HUH
THANKS, DAVE CERBERUS REALLY MEANS IT THANKS FOR THE NEEDLE IN CERBERUS' EYE, JAKA'S NEW BOYFRIEND ABANDONING CERBERUS ON JUNO THANK YOU, DAVE FOR EVERYTHING
SO JUMP ALREADY
RIGHT YOU ARE



CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH


HEH
CRUNCH!
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
GULP
?


WHATTA MAROON.
HEH HEH HEH
WHAT AN ULTRA-MAROON!
GUY


GUYS
ALCOHOL IS FREE
AND THERE'S NO 'LAST CALL'
COMING THIS COLD WINTER TO A COMIC STORE NEAR YOU

JULES FEIFFER IN THE CEILING

Two years have passed since Jules Feiffer's *The Man in the Ceiling* was published. Not being a fan of the New York literary 'scene', I'm not sure if it was reviewed extensively or at all. If it was, the certainty exists that the point of the book was lost on the reviewers if those reviewers were just... well... *reviewers* (and not creators). Art Spiegelman's back-cover blurb left a bad taste in my mouth. While it would make sense from the standpoint of a New York publisher to have the creator of *Maus* endorse a new work by Feiffer (successful New York Jewish cartoonist gives thumbs up to successful New York Jewish cartoonist), there is an apples-and-oranges quality at work, from my vantage point. It makes about as much sense as having Charles Burns do the back-cover blurb for Eisner's *Dropsie Avenue*. Spiegelman can't help but be aware (at some level) of the inappropriateness — working 'Batman's punch' into his 'endorsement' is an eyebrow sufficiently arched to induce a universal wince among Feiffer's devotees.

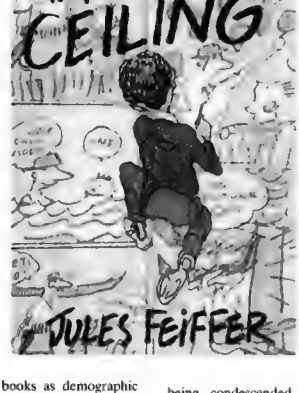
As a card-carrying Feiffer devotee, permit me to redress the balance in my own small way (mindful of the fact that a Harvey award for 'Best Cartoonist' offers meagre literary firepower in a shoot-out with a Pulitzer — even a 'special' Pulitzer):

The Man in the Ceiling is a deceptive work. It's a book intended for children — at least that's what it purports to be — more accurately that's what its dust jacket purports it to be. I prefer not to take the dust jacket's word for it, myself.

On the one hand, the dust jacket has a case. The language, sentence structure, composition are all of the straightforward variety favoured by authors addressing adult buyers of children's books as demographic quarry. One can picture Aunt Tilly in a Fifth Avenue bookstore in search of a 'nice book' for her nephew. She reads the dust jacket, skims through a few paragraphs and decides it's just the thing for little Timmy who spends all of his time in the basement drawing his funny books. We must trust to the tender mercy of Fate that Aunt Tilly's cursory examination misses any of the pithy, characteristically Feifferesque deprecations about the value of school (nil, of course) and any other assertions guaranteed to raise Aunt Tillian ire.

The Man in the Ceiling is a Trojan horse, you see.

The thought occurs in anticipation of the imminent thesis that perhaps Spiegelman is 'in on the game'. Perhaps 'Batman's punch' is his own contribution to the equine subterfuge. If such is the case, the Harvey apologizes, abjectly, to the 'special' Pulitzer.



Distilled to its essence, *The Man in the Ceiling* concerns Jimmy Jibbell, a young boy who writes and draws his own comic books in the basement of his parents' house. He has two sisters. Lisi, the elder, makes his life a living hell but is also the most avidly interested in his creativity. Susu, the younger, is simply devoted to him in all regards, particularly the stories he TELLS her. (Feiffer makes a key point of this. Despite the boy's drawing ability, his younger sister only wants him to TELL her stories. She has no interest in seeing the characters drawn.) The boy's mother is a fashion illustrator. His father is a white-collar drone. At a critical juncture in the story we are presented with Uncle Lester, a creator of Broadway musicals who has never had a show produced despite twelve years of trying. (The musical with which Uncle Lester finally 'gets it right' is called *Robotica*, which, from its description, bears an uncanny resemblance to an early '60s Feiffer piece, 'The Lonely Machine', which appeared in an issue of *Playboy*. Whether the allusion is just that — or whether some treatment of 'The Lonely Machine' as a musical comedy actually exists in some form — my interest was piqued by the reference.) There is also Charlie Beemer, the most popular and accomplished 'all-boy' student in Jimmy's school. Interspersed with Feiffer's ink and wash drawings of the events in the story are crude pencil comic-book pages from Jimmy's laborious pre-teen efforts as a comic-book creator.

Back in Aunt Tilly Land, one pictures little Timmy being horrified by his present. Two sentences *in* he *knows* he is being condescended to (despite Art Spiegelman's assurances to the contrary on the back cover — if only Spiegelman had pencilled an issue of *Youngblood*. Alas...). It's a calculated risk on Feiffer's part. He is too much aware of his own childhood to be unmindful of the delicate balance that must be struck. He has something to tell the little Timmys of the world. But, in order to get to little Timmy, he has to go through a) a New York book publisher, b) mainstream bookstores, c) Aunt Tilly, d) Mum and Dad. From the point of view of all four hurdles he has psychic molestation as his agenda. The only hope is to come across as kindly old Uncle Jules with a perfectly harmless little children's book (the first ten pages wouldn't furrow the brow of Mother Teresa). To extend our speculative scenario, Little Timmy thanks Aunt Tilly in the desultory way common to all boys who have just gotten

a sucker punch to their age group for Christmas. He puts it aside. But a week later, maybe a month, maybe six months (Uncle Jules is very patient, Little Timmy), he's reread the latest *Spawn* for the fourth time and decides... ah, what the fuck.

And then he and kindly old Uncle Jules are...

Alone!

BWAH-hahahahah!

Now, understand that the menace implied there is purely from the standpoint of Aunt Tilly and Mum and Dad. What is compelling about *The Man in the Ceiling* (and what makes it a seminal work of its kind) is that it constitutes a creator's direct communication with the would-be creator This is an avenue near and dear to whatever I'm using for a heart these days. The realisation is abroad in the land that there is a secondary birth in the life of the creative individual. Blood relation jockeys for position and prominence with Creative relation (influence and peer) — a meaty theme hidden from popular sentiment by its 'outlaw' nature. In *The Man in the Ceiling* this is sharply focussed to a laser-like intensity beneath its cosmetic exterior of being an innocent, nice book about 'a boy just like me'. It documents the birth of the creative mind, creative awareness, creative sensibility. The effect (assuming it 'worked' — we won't know until Little Timmy's another ten or fifteen years older) is not dissimilar to the effect Feiffer's 1971 interview in *Playboy* had on the fifteen-year-old version of the chap typing these words.

He KNOWS!

Jules Feiffer KNOWS that I don't fit in anywhere. He KNOWS that the best I can manage is a grudging acceptance of the fact of my existence. He KNOWS that comic books are more important to me than my family. He KNOWS that the comic books I draw in the basement are more real to me than school or a job (please, God, no!) or my friends or what I read in the newspaper or whatever grown-ups happen to be flipping out about this week.

He's OLD! But he KNOWS!

(Now — being almost forty — I don't use the term 'old' quite so casually.)

There is an eerie, Stephen King quality about it. No, more accurately, an 'occult' (hidden) quality about it. Impenetrable mystery, that so few 'connect' with comic books at a visceral level or at the core of the psyche. The veil, the fog, is at its thickest, its murkiest as a child picks up a pencil and a piece of paper and KNOWS (just KNOWS) that 'the thing' has been found. *The Man in the Ceiling* documents the peculiar effects attendant upon that discovery, the fact that the birth of a creative sensibility induces a kind of creeping insanity in the uncreative individuals in proximity to it. At any moment a benign friend or family member can flare into an inescapable malignancy. Beneath the mask of concern, benevolence, cameraderie is the fear and hatred of the 'different one', which (one is left to suppose) is as ancient as society itself.

In the story (as in life) this exists everywhere just as the creative sensibility encounters it: the inexplicable imposition of a needless impediment that recalls the belief in demonic possession. Whether the impediment is thrust in the way by a parent, sibling, friend — the overwhelming urge is to ask: Who *are* you? I know you have the face of (my father, my teacher, my best friend), but WHO'S IN THERE?

It is only Uncle Lester, the creator of Broadway musicals, who implies no threat. (Suspect at various junctures in the story, but he always comes through.) He encourages, he is a good audience, he pays attention. He expresses preferences (knows INSTINCTIVELY when his nephew is drawing his comics for some other purpose than serving his own creative sensibility). He is Feiffer's stand-in in the proceedings. Like Feiffer in 1965, the uncle is on the cusp of a Broadway success and, like Feiffer, he has that success snatched from him by the New York reviewers.

The message is implicit. It never stops, Little Timmy. You can get past your parents and your teachers and all the rest just by getting older and getting out on your own. But those demons pursue you. They inhabit people at inopportune moments, interpose themselves between you and your audience.

The first and only time I met Jules Feiffer, I remember telling him how much I liked his strip about Irwin Corpulent. I quoted it badly (a Feiffer strip has an internal melody that is lost in encapsulation): *I'm a pillar of the community, got a big promotion, a fancy new office. But inside I'm thinking, you're a fraud. Someday they're going to find you out and come and take it all away. I get awards, testimonial dinners. But inside I'm thinking, you're a sham. Someday they're going to find you out and come and take it all away.*

Etcetera, etcetera in that vein. How wonderful the guy's life is and the inner voice always saying: *Someday they're going to find you out and come and take it all away.*

The punch line is that, one day, he's sitting in his office and a delegation of people come in. He figures they're there to give him a good citizenship award or something. One of them says, 'Irwin Corpulent, we've found you out and we've come to take it all away.'

'So I cleaned out my desk and I left.

When they find you out, they find you out...

...why argue?'

I told him how much I identified with that strip. He asked me if I knew *why* I identified with that strip so much. I really didn't. He said, 'Because you've never had a large failure in your life. I used to identify with the strip myself until *Little Murders* closed on Broadway after a handful of performances. Now I don't identify with that strip. You find out that life goes on. They can't take anything away from you that really matters.'

The reassurance that I got from that simple observation could only have come from another creator. I try to pass that on where I can. The conclusion of *The Man in the Ceiling* resonates with that observation and the experience — the hard experience — from which it issued and which was transformed by Feiffer's indefatigable (hell, let's use the word) Spirit into a shining piece of creative armour.

The Man in the Ceiling should be in every comic-book store in the world. If you know a kid around the age of ten or eleven who is starting to draw his own comic books, you can do him (or her) no greater favour than to give him (yeah, probably him) a copy.

Just don't let his Aunt Tilly or his Mum or Dad read past the first ten pages.

The Man in the Ceiling
Jules Feiffer, Harper Collins, 1993.
ISBN 0-06-205035-4

COMICS RETAILER

700 East State St.
Iola, WI 54990-0001
(715) 445-2214

October 3, 1995

Dave Sim
Aardvark-Vanaheim, Inc.
P O. Box 1674, Station C
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4R2
CANADA

Dear Dave.

I thought I'd let you know about a new feature we've instituted to help self-publishers reach out to retailers. The "Small Press Profile" feature, with additional text from Carol Denbow, starts in our November issue, a stat of the first one is enclosed.

The key effect of this feature, which I hope will not be lost on self-publishers even though I can't say it out explicitly in print, is to give self-publishers a one-time Reader Service Number (and thus, the subsequent mailing list) which they couldn't otherwise get without a $300 display ad. I'm working on our ad folks to come up with some sort of affordable ad program for the small-press community, but in the meantime I'm trying to use those resources I do have some say over to help publishers make direct contacts, unhindered by the distribution crises. The "Profile" features is a start. Please let me know if there are other ways I can help

If you'd like to encourage self-publishers to participate in the "Profile" feature, the particulars are on the enclosed news release. I can send that on disk if you need it. Thanks, and I'm looking forward to Cerebus #300!

Best regards,

John Jackson Miller

kp krause publications

COMICS RETAILER

700 East State St.
Iola, WI 54990-0001
(715) 445-2214

To: Independent, "small-press" and self-publishers
From: John Jackson Miller, editor, *Comics Retailer*

With all the changes taking place in the comics industry, several of *Comics Retailer*'s readers have expressed concern over the plight of publishers at the grassroots level. Likewise, many self-publishers have expressed interest in reaching out to our readership, which includes more than 5,000 comics retailers, to offer introductory materials to interested stores.

So in the spirit of the "Adopt A Comic" suggestion by our "Small Store Strategy" columnist, Preston Sweet, *Comics Retailer* is setting aside space each issue in its publisher news section to put at least one small-press publisher in *direct* communication with retailers. Starting with our November 1995 cover-dated issue (#44), "Small Press Spotlight" joins our stable of regular features.

Each issue's "Small Press Spotlight" item lists the publisher, gives a *brief* description of the title being offered, describes whatever items the publisher is offering free to interested retailers (we suggest sample "reader-copy" comics, fliers and other promotional items). Carol Denbow of Star Clipper Books, St. Louis, Mo., has signed on to write brief profiles/interviews from the retailers' perspective.

In addition — and this is what sets this feature apart from any publisher profiles we've done in the past — each "Small Press Spotlight" will have a reader service number which retailers can also use to request information from the publisher. Two months after the "Spotlight" runs, our circulation department will send the publisher a list of addresses of all the retailers requesting more information and/or whatever free promotional materials were offered.

By putting free sample comics and promotional materials in the hands of interested retailers, the publisher gains possible new readers; additionally, the publisher gains a list of interested retailers that can be used to arrange signings and more in-depth promotions.

We're starting with one publisher a month; inviting some, taking requests from others — in much the same manner we schedule contest sponsors for our "Market Beat" surveys. If we build up enough of a waiting list, we may increase the number printed each month. For example, in November, we're spotlighting Angus MacLeod's Highland Graphics, publisher of *Ehlissa*; in December, it's Mike Cohen's Retrografix, publisher of *Strange Attractors*; and in January, it's Mark Oakley's 1 Box Publishing, publisher of *Thieves and Kings*.

My intention is to limit this feature as much as possible to genuine "cottage industry" self-publishers; single-title publishers whose staffing or resources prevent them from offering much retailer support beyond sample copies and personal appearances. While it is preferable that the publisher's title be carried by one or more direct-market distributors so that interested retailers can have convenient access to the copies they need, that is not a requirement.

This program is generated by *Comics Retailer*'s editorial department. It is not intended to undercut or supplant the services our advertising department offers. We're approaching this wholly as part of our "comics community service" obligation to put publishers in touch with retailers — including those publishers that can't imundate us with several press releases a week.

(MORE)

To get started, we'll need a publisher's

- company name;
- address;
- phone number;
- contact name;
- a one-paragraph description of the title being promoted (with illustration if available),
- a *general* description of items offered in any "Introductory Pack" (you should only be specific to the extent that you know you'll have the material to meet demand),
- a description of the other kinds of retailer promotions you're willing to try, and
- a listing of distributors (if any) carrying the described title.

Publishers interested in taking part in this program should contact John Jackson Miller, *Comics Retailer* editor, at 700 E. State St., Iola, WI 54990. The phone number is (715) 445-2214 and the fax number is (715) 445-4087.

Small Press Spotlight: Highland Graphics

Highland Graphics
publishers of *Ehlissa*

"We sell *Ehlissa* with a money-back guarantee. Nobody has ever returned one."

— James Echols, Einstein's Comics, Games and Art, Garland, Texas

***Ehlissa* trade paperback**

If you have thought about buying Angus MacLeod's *Ehlissa* but have passed because it was so far along in the story, it may be time to look again. Coming out shortly is the first trade paperback, *Strange New Worlds*, which collects the first 10 issues plus an additional 18 pages of art and story from *Ehlissa* #31. If that's not enough, beginning with next issue, this title — a blend of science fiction and fantasy — features full-color wrap-around covers.

Ehlissa tells the story of Ehlissa Faith MacLaren, who is trying to survive as she teleports from one alternate Earth to another, encountering "living gods, vampires, star cruisers, sorcerers and islands floating in ether." Currently on issue #36, *Ehlissa* centers on detailed characters and elaborate plots to maintain reader interest.

Two additional trade paperbacks, due in February 1996 and May 1996, will collect issues #11-20 and #21-30, respectively.

Ehlissa retails for $2 per issue, and the trade paperbacks will be priced at $14.95.

Free retailer support kit

For retailer support, Highland Graphics offers a poster of the cover from *Strange New Worlds* and fliers sporting the art from *Ehlissa* #31. The reproductions of the pages on the fliers are easily readable, and, as free handouts, should function to gain reader interest in stores.

According to Angus MacLeod, Highland Graphics will provide the kit to retailers circling **105** on the reader service card located in this issue.

Contact points

For retailer support on an ongoing basis, retailers should contact:

HIGHLAND GRAPHICS
Box 19, R.R. #1 Englishtown
Victoria Co., Nova Scotia B0C 1H0
CANADA
Phone: Darren Hefferon (902) 929-2524, and Angus MacLeod (902) 919-2104
Website: http://www.taisbean.com/commercial/ehlissa/home.html

— Carol Denbow
Star Clipper Books, St. Louis, Mo.

dream diary

COUNTDOWN TO TWO HUNDRED

Rick Veitch, not surprisingly, makes a telling case for keeping a dream diary. He's not as ardent, as single-minded as, say, Dave Sim discussing self-publishing — which is to say that there's nothing of the psychic bully in him about it. There really doesn't have to be. He's right. You know he's right. As a creative individual, any roadmap, signpost or signal flare from the unconscious is — at the very least — grist for the mill, food for thought, or — at worst — chewing gum for the cortex. Like me (Dave Sim, that is), he has learned to recognize when the glazing of the eyes of the listener enters its terminal phase — when to leave it alone.

So, I had this burst of insight that I might give it the old college try as I neared completion of the 1,000 (999 if you consider page 20 an ad)-page *Mothers & Daughters*. What might my unconscious mind have to tell me at the conclusion of four years of creativity applied to a single story line?

Here are the results. In good Norman Mailleresque existential fashion, the outcome was uncertain. Dream no. 5 switches from dream to wakefulness where the italics stop and this here typeface reemerges. As to whether I'll try this again anytime soon…

Don't hold your breath.

Dream No. 1
(after finishing page 13 of issue 200 – September 4, 6:35 a.m.)

I am working on a comic-book story which is an adaptation of the movie Double Indemnity. *In the dream, I believe that the adaptation is a faithful one (my recollection of the film is fuzzy, so I'm not sure how the remaining pages are going to go). I'm drawing a large panel of Fred MacMurray standing in the church parking lot next to my parents' house. I'm using a film noir approach and planning mentally how to render the reflections of the characters in the rain puddles so they resemble Gerhard's backgrounds of Pluto. In the panel, the hand of the husband is visible, gripping the sleeve of MacMurray's jacket. He is worried about the scheme they have cooked up (of course, in the movie MacMurray's conspirator is the wife, played by Barbara Stanwyck). MacMurray's expression (radiating confidence) shows he has no respect for the husband for being skittish. In the next 'scene' I have become the husband. My wife has handcuffed my right arm (to the bed?) and we are starting to make love. The right part of her body is covered with tattoos which are of ancient matriarchal origin. Some of the tattoos are transferring themselves to the left side of my body. I fall asleep. When I wake up, I am an observer of the scene again. Both the husband and wife are waking up, chained to the wall. A table is set near them piled high with food. On two of the plates their respective faces sit, like death masks. They both start screaming. Fred MacMurray is delivering a long soliloquy about how he has double-crossed them both, all the while stuffing food into his mouth, chewing and smacking his lips noisily. He is overacting to an unbelievable degree. I recall that the film was made in 1944 and I speculate to myself about whether overacting is a symptom of the end of the war being imminent, the cause of the war ending or an unconscious reaction for or against the soon-to-be postwar world. On the screen, MacMurray is throwing a nearly full bottle of apple cider at the wall. Before it hits, I wake up.*

Dream No. 2
(after finishing pages 14 and 15 of issue 200 – September 5, 7:41 a.m.)

I'm at my old high school and (evidently) playing in an international volleyball meet. It's unclear how the players are rotated on and off the court, and I can't seem to get an answer out of anyone (including Rick Veitch). I finally take up a position in the front left corner of the court. The ball is served by our team (we're playing Rumania). A woman in the back row of their side gets part of the ball, but it looks like it's going to drop in. Another player makes a great recovery, scooping the ball directly at the net far to my right. The ball comes off the net, dropping to the floor, and another player passes it straight up and (wait a minute — that's too many passes, isn't it?) a woman in the front row spikes it onto our side. A woman on our side points and waves to indicate the ball has landed out of bounds (I can't see from where I'm standing). A curtain descends between the two teams and we stand around waiting to see what happens next. It's 8:20 p.m. and the judges have ruled there's not time to finish the game before the dinner break. Gerhard is giving me a lift back to the hotel and I put on a fake Rumanian accent: 'You know… pairhaps thees… Ca-na-da… ees not so daffrant froom Rumania.' No laugh. I spend the rest of the ride picturing what suburban Kitchener must look like to someone from Eastern Europe. Strange and sort of sterile, I decide.

Dream No. 3
(after finishing page 16 and half of 17 of issue 200 – September 6, 7:46 a.m.)

A lucid dream. I am aware that I am asleep and dreaming. There is the black-and-white cover of a comic-book 'ashcan'. I am thinking how appropriate it is that I am dreaming about this comic book as I am completing issue 200. Evidently I have dreamt this comic book many, many times before. It exists without any context somewhere to the left of my field of vision. I consider focussing on it to memorize every detail for when I am writing this the next day and then think how unnecessary that is. I know every inch of the book as intimately as I know my own apartment. I wake up and can remember nothing about it except that it had three inset pictures (in the style of the old E.C. Comics) on the left side of the front cover.

Dream No. 4
(after finishing page 17 pencilling and inking parts of 18 and 19 – September 7, 7:45 a.m.)

I've been listening to Steve Bissette give a talk. I think it's the Journeys into Fear slide show and then notice that the lights are on and there are no slides being shown. He's just finishing. He says, 'We'll do what we have to do. That's what we've always done.' I wake up.

Dream No. 5
(after finishing pages 18, 19 and 20 – September 8, 5:40 a.m.)

I'm in a courtroom, looking down on it. There is a woman in the witness box to the judge's right. I have the impression that it is Judge Ito, but it is a very vague impression. The woman is a white blur. The judge says, 'You may step down.' I think to myself, 'Yes, I really think you should.' At that instant I am awakened by an UNBELIEVABLY sharp muscle spasm in my lower back. I try to writhe in pain but there is nowhere I can turn that doesn't send waves of pain through my body. I clench my teeth and wince as hard as I can. For some reason I know it's very important that I get up and walk around. The full moon outside the window, bright as a klieg light, has turned most of the sky blue. I walk around, forcing myself to stand up straight (dammit). Fortunately I find that standing up straight doesn't hurt any worse than hunching over. I circle the apartment a couple of times and then return to bed, easing myself into a prone position. I put the electric blanket on 'HI' (Hi!). I fall asleep a few minutes later, awakening again at 7:46 with much of the soreness 'baked' out of my lower back. I pack for Pittsburgh. I phone a cab to go to the studio. A nurse gets on at the 10th and pushes for the 1st floor. She then makes a 'what am I doing?' gesture and noise and pushes 5. She apologizes that the elevator is now going to stop on 1. I smile. 'That's okay. Beats walking.' On the fifth floor she gets off and another woman gets on and pushes for the Lobby. The elevator stops on 'one' and there is another woman. She stands in the doorway fiddling with her keys, seemingly trying to remember what she's doing here. She asks, 'Up or down?' The other woman and I both say, 'Down'. She hesitates another moment and then, holding the door open, she reaches around to the control panel to insert her key in the 'hold' keyhole, muttering something about 'Well, I can just put a few things on...' I've had enough at this point and say, 'I'm really sorry, but I have a cab waiting downstairs...' She assesses this for a moment, considers arguing, and then backs out without saying anything. I push the 'door close' button. The elevator starts down and the first woman turns to me and says, 'I have someone waiting for me, too.' I step into the conspiratorial moment. 'Well, I guess we both lucked out, then.' She smiles.

preview

THE TOP TEN

From the home office in Bathurst, New Brunswick:

NUMBER TEN: *Photo Copy Comix #9 – ashcan – $1.50 – 56 pages.*
Highlights include Rabid Monkey in 'Genghis Gibbon' by Joel Steudler, and Rabid Monkey in 'Job Two' (part two) by John Kozlowski and Steudler, 'Xenophile' (part nine) by Jesse Prentiss and a really phenomenal self-contained 'Dissension' short piece by Robert S. Moyer and Joel Steudler. Every issue is great: Photo Copy Comix, 1419 Brookline Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA, 15226.

NUMBER NINE: *It's All True* — a collection of 50 of the best of Scott A. Gilbert's 'True Artist Tales'. Published with the assistance of a Xeric Foundation grant. Innovative page designs and a rendering style reminiscent of Paul Pope and David Lapham. Apeshot Studios, 5715 Cornish, Houston, Texas, 77007. $4.95 U.S. postage paid.

NUMBER EIGHT: *Bizarre Heroes #13 – $2.95 – b&w – 24 pages.*
I could just tell that Don Simpson was getting closer and closer to defining the nature of *Bizarre Heroes*. The perfect 'jumping-on point' for new readers. Don't believe me? Well, you're wrong! The strongest super-hero comic you can buy without a prescription. Fiasco Comics, P.O. Box 44326, Pittsburgh, PA, 15205.

NUMBER SEVEN: *Devlin Demon: Not for Normal Children (book one) – $3.00 – b&w – magazine format – 48 pages.*
Paul Salscheider's 1993 innaugural effort. Contains 'Bus Top', 'The Tutor' and 'The Zoo of Mine', as well as the three-part 'Devlin Demon's Suite Revenge'. Surreal, haunting slice-of-life stories the way I like them. Make checks payable to Paul Salscheider, P.O. Box 5601, Novato, CA, 94948-5601.

NUMBER SIX: *Street Smell #1 – 32 pages - b&w – $4.00.*
Goddesses! Bikinis! Gravy! Apples! Sexy Waitresses! Weird Worship! Says so on the cover. Bruce Mutard delivers all this and more in a well-rendered, sexy and thought-provoking first issue.
Bad Art Studios, P.O. Box 2231, North Brighton, Victoria 3186, Australia.

NUMBER FIVE: *Ragmop #1 and 2 – 24 pages – b&w – $2.95 U.S.*
Rob Walton's Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Comic. Dinosaurs hijacking an alien space ship, Alice Hawkings looking for work as a super-heroine, in search of the O-Ring. Beautifully presented and funny as hell — of special note is Alison Upper's ultra-posh cover designs. This ain't no party, this ain't no disco, this ain't no foolin' around (Mm. Strike that last part there).
Planet Lucy Press, 264 Bloor Street West, P.O. Box 52536, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 3C5.

NUMBER FOUR: *Tales from the Bog #1 (shipping in November) – 24 pages – b&w – $2.95 U.S.*
Marcus Lusk started honing his drawing skills last year in anticipation of breaking into the big time.

This one's going to get compared to Pogo and Vaughn Bodé — don't you believe it. *Tales from the Bog* stands alone. 'Paper Chase' is one of the best stories I've ever read about comic-book collecting. Marcus Lusk, Aberration Press, 705 Panorama Terrace, Birmingham, AL, 35216.

NUMBER THREE: *Joe Matt's Peep Show #7 & 8 – 24 pages – b&w – $2.95 U.S., $3.50 CAN.*

Every time one of the Drawn & Quarterly guys takes a new direction with his work, the avant-garde has a trembling anxiety attack (witness Chester's *Underwater* being included on the *Comics Journal* 'Shit List'. What fools these mortals be). Me? Whatever Joe writes and draws, I'm going to be at the front of the line for my copy. It's impossible not to be swept up in the proceedings. Available from Drawn & Quarterly, 5550 Jeanne Mance St. #16, Montreal, Quebec, H2V 4K6.

number two

victims INDUSTRIA

Everything of Marcus Gray's from victims Industria. *Do yourself a favour and get a postal money order for lots of pounds sterling and send it to Marcus at 56 Crawford Gardens, St. Andrews, Fife, KY16 8XQ, Scotland, UK (see below for available titles).*

victims INDUSTRIA began in 1988 as *victims*, a series of photocopied texts and graphics in various formats. The numbered issues of *victims* ceased (at twenty-three) in 1990 during *The Widow Ciccone* series, and the entire output became *victims INDUSTRIA*, allowing all of the work, not just the *Ciccone* sheets, to exist outside the constraints of a numerical order. *Melancholia* and *thread on a jumper* are both self-contained booklets; *The Widow Ciccone* was completed in 1992 and is currently being reformatted as a series of a5 booklets; *threefiftyseven* is an ongoing series.

Inventory: Summer 1995

thread on a jumper @ £3.00

Melancholia @ £3.00

The Widow Ciccone @ £3.00 each

threefiftyseven @ £3.00 each – currently available:

burning car
public Castration
birth tongs
"shoots dead" clipping
burn without opening

threefiftyseven @ £4.00 each – a few remaining copies of the penultimate format of the series, which will not be reprinted. Due to the reformatting, their content does not match exactly that of the corresponding titles above:

burn without opening
(some with embossed card cover)
birth tongs (tracing overlay cover)
"shoots dead" clipping

Sampler pack (one copy of *thread on a jumper, Melancholia, The Widow Ciccone* and *threefiftyseven*) @ £10.00

Total postage and packing: UK/Europe – £0.50
USA/Canada – £1.00

Cheques/postal orders in £ sterling payable to Marcus Gray.

number one

PATTY CAKE

In a day and age when comparisons are both odious and the key to successful marketing, the temptation is to describe Scott Roberts' *Patty Cake* as a cross between Peter Bagge's Girly-Girl and Charles Schulz's Peppermint Patty. I mean, it's accurate as far as it goes, but it does put ol' Scott in the awkward position of losing both audiences simultaneously. Not enough of the old Bagge 'edge' to interest the misanthropic sensibilities of the grunge generation (assuming they exist anywhere outside of ad agencies). A little too much of an edge for Aunt Tilly (Christ, not her again, eh?). No, let us be brave in a bad world and set forth the proposition that — like *Tales from the Bog — Patty Cake* is its own peculiar and engaging self. There is much of childhood in this work, keenly observed but without the self-congratulation of those who remember *professionally* and so call excessive attention to remembered detail.

Scott is running out of money.

There really ought to be a self-publisher theme song, you know. 'I'm on schedule, but I'm a-runnin' Outta Money'. *Patty Cake* 4 will appear in comic-book stores (yes, the ones you shop at, for the most part). After that, the fate of the book is uncertain.

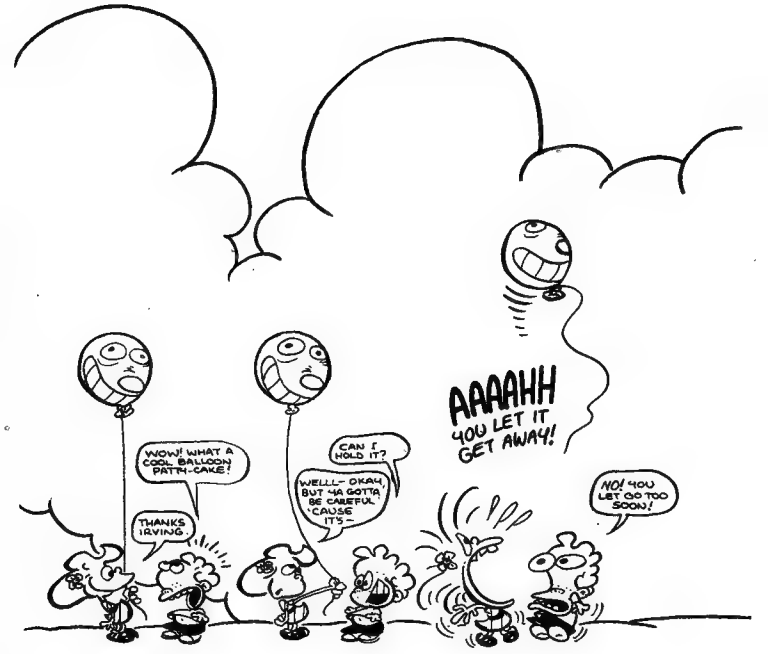
Scott himself is a cheerful, amiable chap, very dedicated to his book, very reliable. I've enjoyed several conversations with him at the Spirits stops he's attended (my first question is always, 'Is the next issue out?' which has more to do with my urge to read the next one than to 'check up' on his progress as a self-publisher).

If you're a fan or a store owner looking for someone who needs a helping hand and can, at the same time, 'deliver the goods', you can't do much better than my friend, Mr. Scott Roberts.

Patty Cake 1–3, $2.95 U.S., 24 pages. Available from Permanent Press, 24P Edison Ct., Monsey, NY, 10952.

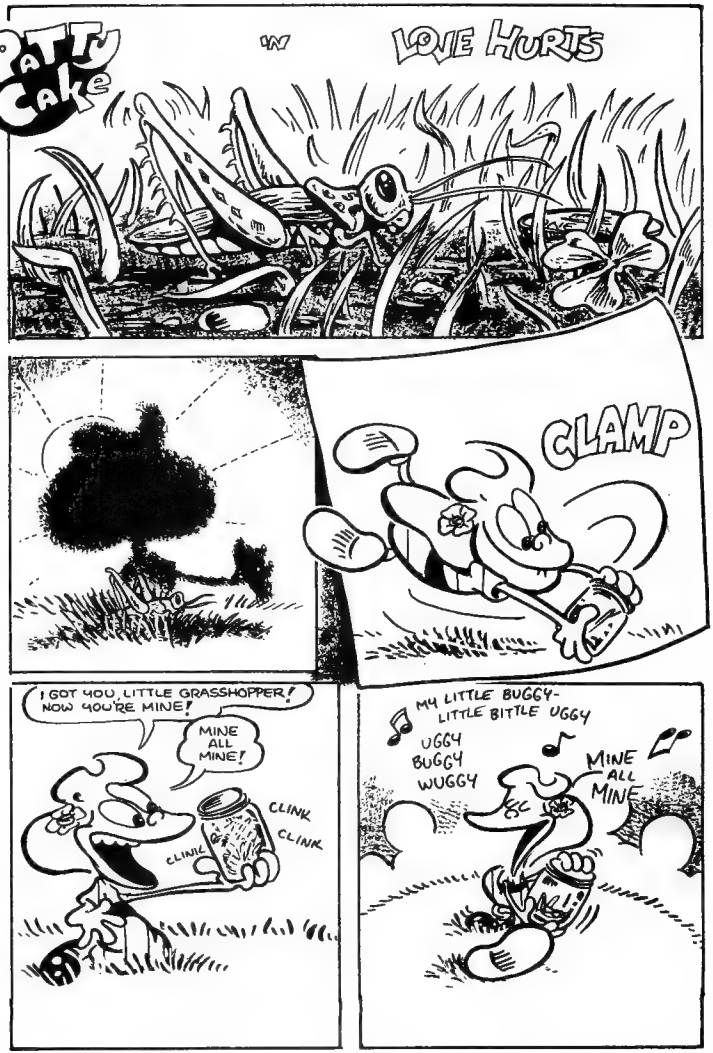
Here are a couple of gems from issue 3 (and a never-before-seen story especially for this Preview):

PATTY CAKE IN "PEACE ON EARTH"


WOW! WHAT A COOL BALLOON PATTY-CAKE!
THANKS IRVING.
CAN I HOLD IT?
WELLL- OKAY BUT YA GOTTA BE CAREFUL 'CAUSE IT'S-
AAAAHH YOU LET IT GET AWAY!
NO! YOU LET GO TOO SOON!

WAAA!
MY DAD BOUGHT ME THAT BALLOON!
YOU LET GO TOO SOON.
STOP SAYING THAT - YOU HINEY HEAD!!
EEP!
I LOVED MY BALLOON. NOW BECAUSE YOU'RE SUCH A STUPID CLUMSY DIMWIT, IT'S GOING TO BURST IN OUTER SPACE!
I HATE YOU
YOU IDIOT.
I DIDN'T DO IT.

I'M GONNA KNOCK YOU INTO NEXT WEEK IRVING.
BUT-PATTY-CAKE, IF WE'RE GONNA FIGHT OVER A BALLOON-HOW WILL THE WORLD EVER STOP WARS?
:GASP: THAT'S SO BEAUTIFUL IRVING-
SNIFF
WHEW!
'BYE MY BALLOON-CARRY YOUR MESSAGE OF PEACE EVERYWHERE YOU GO,
DO YOU THINK MY BALLOON WILL GO TO HEAVEN IRVING?
SURE!
IT'S AMAZING WHAT YA CAN THINK UP WHEN SOMEONE'S ABOUT TO KNOCK YA INTO NEXT WEEK.
THE END

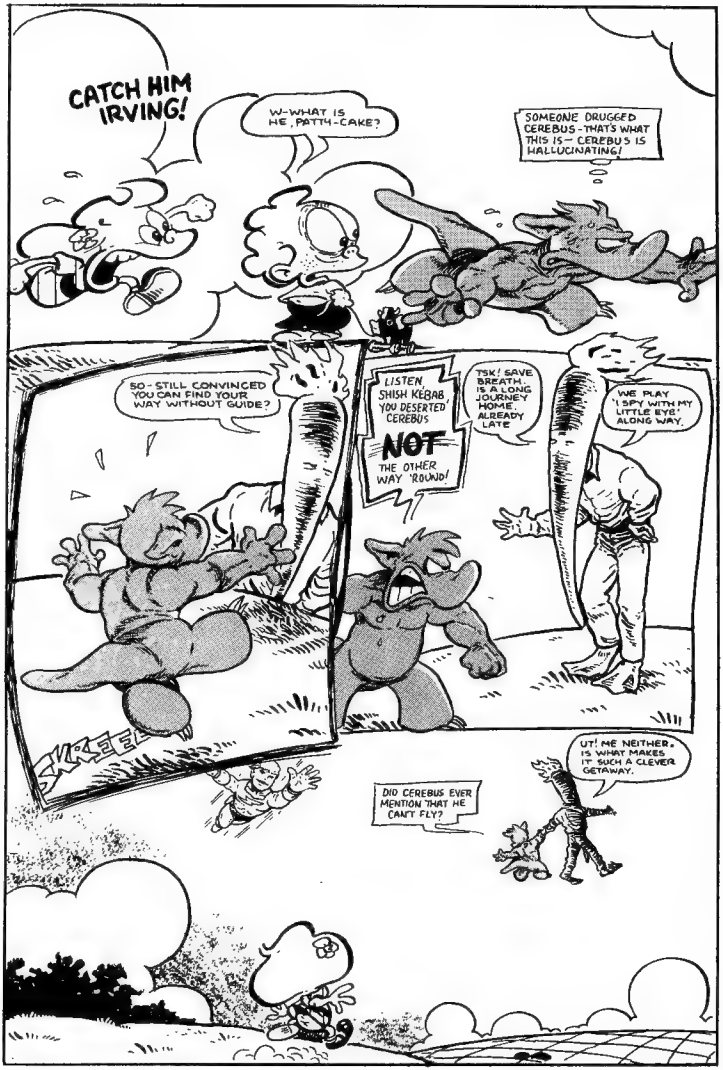

PATTY CAKE
IN
LOVE HURTS
CLAMP
I GOT YOU, LITTLE GRASSHOPPER! NOW YOU'RE MINE!
MINE ALL MINE!
CLINK
CLINK
CLINK
MY LITTLE BUGGY- LITTLE BITTLE UGGY
UGGY BUGGY WUGGY
MINE ALL MINE

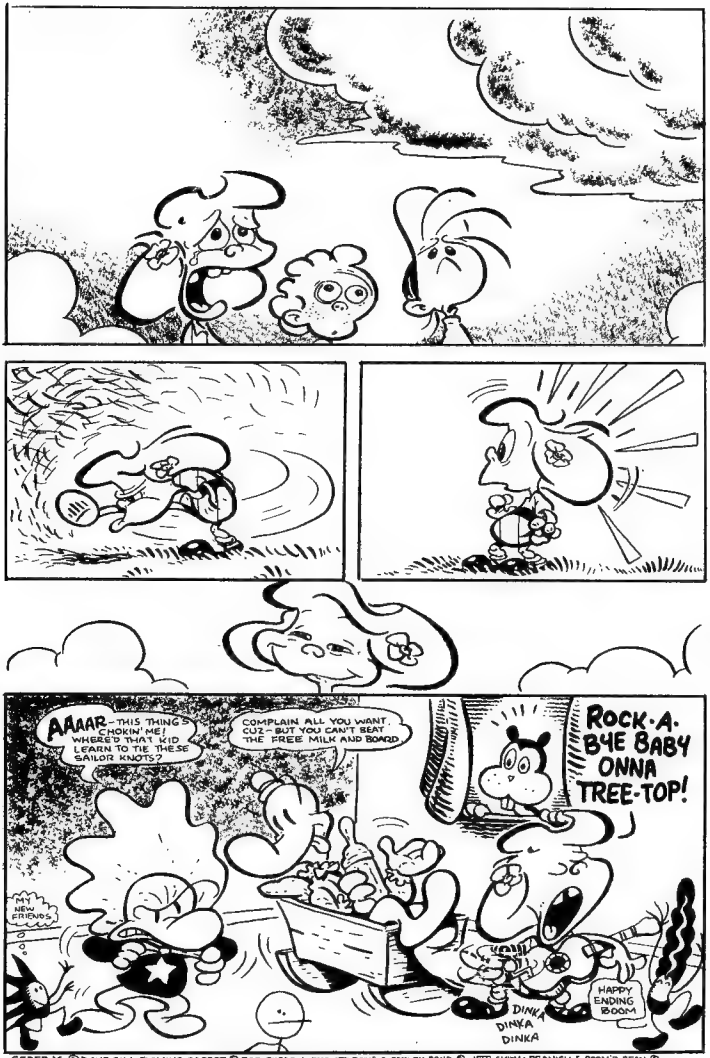
MINE TO KEEP AN' MINE TO—
HUH?
WHY AREN'T YOU MOVING GRASSHOPPER? WHY ARE YOU SO STILL AN'—
SHAKE
SHAKE
CLINK
CLINK
AAHHH I FORGOT TO PUT AIR HOLES IN THE LID!
I KILLED HIM! I KILLED HIM!! I FORGOT TO GIVE HIM AIR AN' NOW HE'S DEAD!!!
POOR GRASSHOPPER—I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU—I ONLY WANTED TO TAKE YOU HOME AN' HAVE YOU FOR A PET—
I WAS GONNA FEED YOU—
AN' MAKE YOU A LITTLE HOUSE—
WHY DID I DO THIS? WHY?
WHY DOES EVERYTHING I DO TURN OUT BAD?
AAAAAAAAAA

IT'S CAUSE I'M BAD! - I'M MEAN AN' I'M CRUEL, AN' I ONLY EVER THINK OF ME!
I HURT EVERYBODY!
OH, THIS IS THE WORST THING I'VE EVER DONE!
THERE, LITTLE GRASSHOPPER. I'M LETTING YOU GO, SO YOUR FAMILY CAN FIND YOU AN' BURY YOU -
OR WHATEVER GRASSHOPPERS DO -
IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO -
!
AND BUGS WONDER WHY PEOPLE STEP ON THEM -
CHEATERS!
END

PATTY CAKE
LOOK, KID - CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW HOW HE GOT HERE - OR WHO YOU ARE - BUT HE'S REALLY NOT IN THE MOOD TO PLAY "DRESS-UP"
OH STOP BEING SUCH A POOP! THIS IS ONLY MAKE-BELIEVE!
GEEZ, YOU COMPLAIN A LOT.
IN GOOD COMPANY
ALL CHARACTERS ARE PROPERTY OF THEIR RESPECTIVE CREATORS AND STAKED AT THE FABULOUS HILTON
B'SIDES, YOU DON'T MAKE A VERY PRETTY BABY ANYWAY
SO INSTEAD—
TARIM!
YOU CAN BE THE GRUMPY OLD GRAMPA -
THAT'S IT! CEREBUS IS OUT OF HERE!
HEY!
SMASH!

ALL GUEST STARS SWIPED BY SCOTT ROBERTS AND DO NOT REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THEIR CREATORS
"IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST FORM OF FATUITY" Y. Izzit


CATCH HIM IRVING!
W-WHAT IS HE, PATTY-CAKE?
SOMEONE DRUGGED CEREBUS - THAT'S WHAT THIS IS - CEREBUS IS HALLUCINATING!
SO - STILL CONVINCED YOU CAN FIND YOUR WAY WITHOUT GUIDE?
LISTEN, SHISH KEBAB, YOU DESERTED CEREBUS NOT THE OTHER WAY 'ROUND!
TSK! SAVE BREATH. IS A LONG JOURNEY HOME. ALREADY LATE
WE PLAY 'I SPY' WITH MY LITTLE EYE' ALONG WAY.
SKREE
UT! ME NEITHER. IS WHAT MAKES IT SUCH A CLEVER GETAWAY.
DID CEREBUS EVER MENTION THAT HE CAN'T FLY?


AAAAR—THIS THING'S PISSIN' ME! WHERE'D THAT KID LEARN TO TIE THESE SAILOR KNOTS?
COMPLAIN ALL YOU WANT, CUZ—BUT YOU CAN'T BEAT THE FREE MILK AND BOARD
ROCK-A-BYE BABY ONNA TREE-TOP!
MY NEW FRIENDS
HAPPY ENDING BOOM
DINKA DINKA DINKA

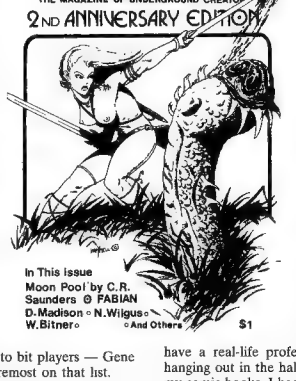
CEREBUS ©DAVE SIM • FLAMING CARROT © BOB BURDEN • PHONEY BONE & SMILEY BONE © JEFF SMITH • BEANISH I. BOOM'R BEAN © LACERTA MARINER • FRANK © JIM WOODRING • THE AMAZING CYNICAL MAN! © MATT FERRELL • 2001 © SCOTT MCCLOUD

memoir

WHY AN AARDVARK?

Our story begins with me winning a call-in trivia question on Kitchener radio station CHYM (back when it was still 1490 on the AM dial — I would do a series of *Doonesbury*-style newspaper strip ads for them years later when they made the switch to 570). I forget what the question was, but I'm pretty sure it was comics-related. Anyway, what I won was a copy of Kensington Market's first (maybe ONLY) album, *Aardvark*. I never listened to the album (to this day my interest in any music is severely limited and my interest in exploring the 'cutting edge' of music nil), but I kept it around for quite a while because, hey, I WON it, right? The cover was a colour photograph of a model stage, the curtains opened. There in the center of the stage was a very strange-looking quadruped. The year would have to have been 1969 or 1970 (maybe some enterprising Kensington Market devotee could narrow it down for us). Anyway, this was the first connection between Dave Sim and Aardvarks.

The next connection was T. Casey Brennan. Now, Casey is another story entirely and one which more than merits a separate and extensive piece, which I've resolved to get to — this resolution going stronger with each 'History of Vampirella' piece I read that neglects to even mention Casey as Vampirella's primary and most prolific scripter way back when. In a larger sense this is the reason that I stopped answering the 'Why an Aardvark' question some time ago. Each thread of the actual, fully interwoven answer is deserving of lengthy explication. Taking it down to 'sound byte' level makes me uncomfortable and reduces many large contributions and contributors to bit players — Gene Day and T. Casey Brennan foremost on that list.



I first became aware of T. Casey back in 1971 when Don and Maggie Thompson, in their mimeo-zine, *Newfangles* (I was a subscriber from early '71 until it merged with Alan Light's *Buyer's Guide* a couple of years later), listed the results of balloting for the ACBA Awards (The Academy of Comic Book Arts — short-lived but influential) for that year. I recognized the names and works of everyone (I believe *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* and *Conan* by O'Neil/Adams and Thomas/Smith dominated the awards that year) except the names of the creators of one of the runner-up 'Best Short Story' awards — this one for 'On the Wings of a Bird' by T. Casey Brennan and Jerry Grandenetti, published in *Creepy* 36. This was well past the Archie Goodwin-Al Williamson-Roy Krenkel-Steve Ditko-Frank Frazetta heyday of the Warren magazines, at least insofar as quality was concerned. They were still profitable; they just weren't very good for the most part — certainly a world away from being an odds-on favourite for an ACBA Award in the 'Best Short Story' category.

Casey lived in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and evidently got word of the SOPAF (Southern Ontario Panel Art Festival) that was held at Now & Then Books in June of 1972 (the same weekend of Watergate and the same weekend Wendy and Richard Pini got married — told you this was complicated and interwoven, didn't I?). He just showed up. Phoned to make sure that there was something going on and came all the way from Michigan, f'cryin' out loud. Riding the wave of his success with 'On the Wings of a Bird', Casey soon got a reputation for showing up anywhere there was a comic-book convention going on (he had a speech impediment which caused him to pronounce his r's as w's, and doing a Casey impression — "Faw out! Faw out! Whewe can I cwash tonight? Can I cwash at youw place?' — guaranteed an easy laugh in the Detroit-Toronto corridor in 1972-73. No one laughed at the joke as much as Casey did himself). I was an interview maniac at the time, having edited the first issue of the *Now & Then Times* in 1972 and working with John Balge on *CANAR* (*Comic Art News & Reviews*). Casey not only agreed to do an interview, he agreed to come back to Kitchener to do it. He even agreed to stay at my parents' place! It was a weird, weird break-point for a sixteen-year-old comic-book fan to have a real-life professional comic-book writer just hanging out in the half of the basement where I kept my comic books. I had dug up as many of his Warren stories as I could in anticipation of doing the interview and found that they were awfully good and awfully different. There was almost nothing of rhetorical Warren-style horror to them. Instead they were allegories, archetypal dark fables with titles like the aforementioned 'On the Wings of a Bird', 'Carrier of the Serpent', 'The Cut-Throat Cat Blues', "Climbers of the Tower'. The stories and Casey's approach to them were a revelation to me. There was the surface of the story and then there was your own interpretation — or various interpretations — to be had in the aftermath. Casey fundamentally changed my view of what constituted a good comic-book story. After reading his work, I found most comic books terribly two-dimensional in their approach. The

surface was all that was there — nothing was going on besides the ostensible. I wrote and drew the first page of a parody of 'On the Wings of a Bird' called 'On the Back of a Pro' and sent it to Casey, asking if he would write the rest of it. He phoned and told me it was great and asked, 'Why, when you've written something this brilliant, why in God's name would you want ME to write it?' It was pretty close to the first time I was ever praised for my creativity, so I finished it — and John published it in *CANAR*. I THINK I even got paid (yeah, I did — John Balge was the first person who paid me for my work. How could I have forgotten that? Sorry, John.).

Now, at this point you must be thinking to yourself that I've succumbed to the temptation to actually write my 'T.Casey Brennan Appreciation Piece'. Not so — believe it or not, this is STILL the *Reader's Digest* version of 'Why an Aardvark?' The rich history of T. Casey Brennan, Figure of Mystery, has yet to be told.

Starting in the early summer of 1973, Casey began planning his own title, to feature his stories drawn by various artists. Vince Marchesano was in on it and various other people. Much to my surprise, I got a script in the mail. Casey wanted ME to do one as well, called 'Picture This'. I pencilled, inked and lettered it, and my pencilling, inking and lettering sucked BIG TIME. I sent it in and he accepted it and then sent me another script. This one was called 'A Boy and His Aardvark'. As diplomatically as possible he asked me just to pencil it — someone else would do the inking and the lettering (perhaps saving it in the process). I really regretted that I had gotten rid of the Kensington Market album since I now had to work from a tiny picture in my dictionary. The story itself which eventually appeared in *Power Comics* 1 perplexed me, being concerned with a young boy and his pet aardvark. The splash panel in particular, where the two of them traverse a gauntlet of people wondering aloud why he doesn't kill the aardvark, etc., etc., seemed over the top. [In later years, as *Cerebus* passed issue 100 and kept going and (I believe) R. Fiore did his review of *Jaka's Story* in which he concluded that I was tired of Cerebus as a character and that his best advice was to 'lose the aardvark' — and when that triggered a wave of 'fan' mail starting '...now that you're tired of Cerebus as a character...' I was struck (not for the first or last time) by Casey's remarkable prescience in working with his allegories.] I finished the pencils and sent them off. At that point Casey and the whole project seemed to vanish off the face of the earth. He resurfaced a year or two later (indirectly) when a local fanzine publisher told me he had bought a Casey script called 'Doorway to the Gods' and wanted me to draw it. I think I got paid two or three dollars a page (the fanzine publisher was a high-school kid). I did see it as an opportunity to FINALLY do a decent job of drawing a Casey script, so I put a lot more time and effort into it than the page rate warranted.

The next time I saw Casey was in the fall of 1976. Someone (I forget who) was putting on a comic-book convention at my old high school — Forest Heights Collegiate — and Casey was one of the invited guests, as was Gene Day. Here, again, I cringe at having to do a literary encapsulation of someone's importance in my life. Another large 'memoir' is required. 'In the fullness of time...' as the saying goes.

Gene and I had hooked up in 1974 and were 'thick as thieves' by 1976. I regularly did work for his *Dark Fantasy* digest zine as well as his other House of Shadows projects like the digest comics anthology *Out of the Depths*. He was starting to get work with Skywald — the Warren wannabe. He lived in Gananoque, Ontario (Gateway to the Thousand Islands, as it's known) upstairs from Augustine Funnell, who was sort of Skywald editor Al Hewetson's fair-haired boy, as far as up-and-coming scripters were concerned. John Balge and I had done an interview with Al Hewetson (although Skywald's publishing offices were in Manhattan, Archaic Al edited *Psycho* and *Nightmare* from his home in St. Catharines, Ontario) that appeared in *CANAR*. At the time, he had suggested we do an interview with Gus, and Gus had told Gene he should talk to me about doing some illustrations for DF (as *Dark Fantasy* was known). Coincidentally, Archaic Al had published only one T. Casey Brennan story and had not been very happy about it (it was part of the inventory he had inherited from the previous editor). Coincidentally, he would publish only one story of mine — 'Cry of the White Wolf' — in the last issue of *Psycho*. It was my first published comic-book script in a newsstand publication.

So, there we were — Gene Day, T. Casey Brennan and myself — on a panel in my old high school in the room where I used to take — History? Biology? I forget, but I guess that either one would be appropriate. It was one of those humiliatingly sparsely attended events (the panel AND the convention). Here're the three of us on the panel — and all of FOUR people in the 'audience'. One of those four people was an attractive brunette with long straight hair. She had a notebook open and as Casey waxed eloquent, she would jot a line or two. I talked for a little while and then Casey and I had a back-and-forth exchange or two. Of this she recorded not a word. As soon as Gene Day opened his mouth she wrote furiously, evidently trying to record his every word verbatim. I interjected a few pithy observations and was more than a little annoyed that she stopped writing whenever I said anything but started writing energetically as soon as Gene started talking again.

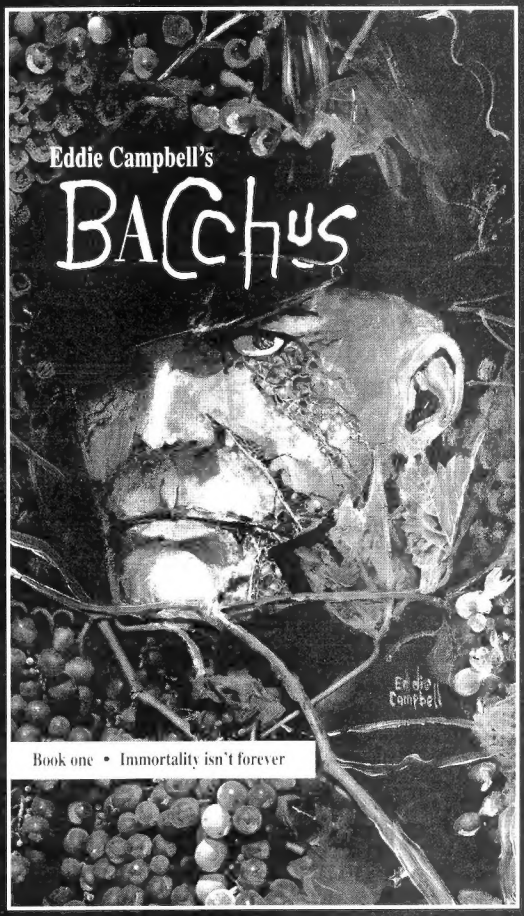
After the panel was over I went back to the dealer's room in the lobby and joined Harry Kremer in mid-conversation with someone.. Harry had just arranged to rent the downstairs of 103 Queen South in addition to the upstairs premises Now & Then Books had occupied since 1971. A light bulb went on over my head. 'I'll work the downstairs, Harry. How about it?' Harry was doubtful. He planned to just have his mother run it. He didn't have the money to — you know — HIRE somebody. 'I'll do it for...seventy-five dollars a month.' He said he would think about it.

I passed the attractive brunette in the halls a couple of times but couldn't catch her eye. It would be another two months before I found out her name.

Denise Loubert.

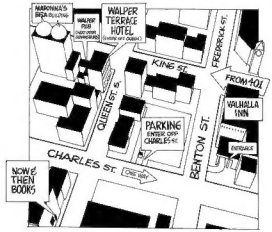
Next: Part Two of 'Why an Aardvark?': 'Hi, Are You Harry?'

On sale in December



96 pages $9·95

SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE



WALPER TERRACE HOTEL

1 King Street West, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 1A1
Telephone (519) 745-4321 • Fax (519) 745-3625
Toll Free 1-800-265-8749

DIRECTIONS:

If crossing into Canada at Detroit: take Hwy. 401 East; Buffalo: take the QEW Toronto to Hwy. 403 Hamilton, then Hwy. 6 North to Hwy. 401 West; Montreal: take Hwy. 401 West from PQ Border. Exit Hwy. 401 at Hwy. 8 West Kitchener-Waterloo. Follow signs for 'Kitchener Downtown'. This will lead you to King Street. The hotel is located at the corner of King and Queen Streets in downtown Kitchener.

KITCHENER, ONTARIO

DECEMBER 3, 1995 • 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The local retailer is Harry Kremer at Now & Then Books — one of the oldest comics stores in existence (they opened their doors across the street at 103 Queen St. S. in the fall of 1971). If you are interested in having them carry copies of your book at the Retailer du Jour table, send a sample copy to:

SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE
c/o Now & Then Books
90 Queen St. South, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 1V9
Telephone: (519) 744-5571

If you need to send a fax, you can send it in care of Encore Records (which is between Now & Then Books and the Walper on Queen Street, for used-record fans of all ages): (519) 744-1370.

★★★★★★★★★★

If the Walper ends up being booked by the time you read this, the 'other' downtown Kitchener hotel is one block east of the Walper:

VALHALLA INN
King & Benton Streets, Kitchener, Ontario
Telephone (519) 744-4141

Rates are $69 a night (Canadian — at the current exchange rate that works out to about $52 U.S.). There's also a Holiday Inn and a Comfort Inn that you'll see a few minutes after you leave the 401, both of which are about ten minutes from downtown.

★★★★★★★★★★

The night before, Charles Vess will be presenting his 'Fantasy Art' slide show and Steve Bissette will be doing his 'Journeys into Fear' slide show downstairs at the Walper Pub, which is next door to the Walper Terrace Hotel, starting at 6 p.m. Since it's Christmas Party season, the best accommodation we could get was the pool table room. If your legs start to hurt, drink faster.

★★★★★★★★★★

Since I live here, I intend to spend most of Saturday going back and forth between the Walper Terrace Lobby, the Walper Pub, and Now & Then Books, looking for all those faces I usually only see in the States. All three places are pretty comfortable so if I get stuck somewhere, you'll just have to come looking for me. It's Ger's day off, so he might be shovelling his driveway or Christmas shopping until later on.

★★★★★★★★★★

Attention, Americans! We're a little bit too far from the border when it comes to Yankee Bucks — you'll have no problem spending it, but the odds are you'll get an exchange rate from (like) 1971. Convert your money into Canadian currency at your bank at home (or a bank near the border), or get a cash advance on your VISA or MC from an Automated Teller Machine. You'll bet billed at the current exchange rate and save yourself some money. You can convert it back when you get home or amaze your friends with all the pretty colours. The oversized gold-coloured coins you get are called Loonies (one dollar Canadian). Pennies (pronounced pen-eez), dimes (pronounced dimes), nickels (pronounced nick-ulz) and quarters (pronounced kwore-terz) are the same as in the U.S. except they have the Queen and things on them, so don't look so confused, okay?

★★★★★★★★★★

Reggie's (where the Walper Terrace lobby should and used to be — it's a long story) is a great place for a quick sandwich, soup, etc. You can also watch all the funny Canadians in their funny Canadian clothing walking by the windows. The Walper Pub is the place to be for the 'après event' party, starting at around 7 p.m. on the 3rd.

★★★★★★★★★★

In between the Walper and the Valhalla is the Charles Street parking lot. They will validate parking. Saturday and Sunday the parking is free. Enter off Charles Street.

CHARLES VESS'

'FANTASY ART'

&

S.R. BISSETTE'S

JOURNEYS INTO

SLIDE SHOWS

THE WALPER PUB

(back room)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2nd
7:00 p.m.

MICHAEL COHEN & MARK SHERMAN

DAVE SIM & GERHARD

'Spirits of Independence'

an exhibition of self-published comic books

more than 50 comics creators including

Steve BISSETTE · Charles VESS
Paul POPE · Martin WAGNER
Greg HYLAND · David DAY
Larry MARDER
David LAPHAM
Jim VALENTINO

admission $3.00

Sunday
December 3, 1995
10 am to 4 pm

OAK ROOM · CRYSTAL BALLROOM · THE LOBBY

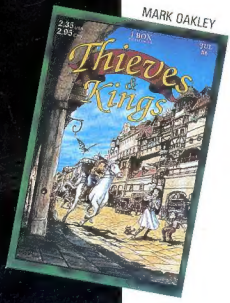
all on the 2nd floor of the

Walper Terrace Hotel

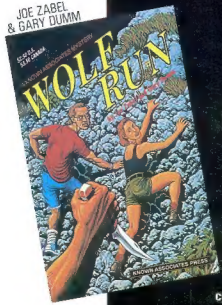
corner of KING & QUEEN · DOWNTOWN KITCHENER

RICK VEITCH

MARK OAKLEY



JOE ZABEL & GARY DUMM



ROB WALTON